

28th District



News & Views



from your State Representative **Gigi Talcott**

Dear friends and neighbors,

Were you one of the voters who helped elect a Republican Legislature and a Democrat governor?

Some feared that such divided government in Olympia would lead to a political standoff. And it was clear that nothing could be accomplished without a lot of talking, listening and working together.

I'm pleased to report that not only did we avoid political gridlock of our state government, but we actually completed our exhausting budget-year legislative session on time for the first time in over 40 years. I say it's a rousing success! Here are some highlights:

- ✓ *Education of children remains the state's top priority with an increased focus on early reading skills.*
- ✓ *Older, violent teens will be sentenced as adults while younger offenders will get treatment much more quickly.*
- ✓ *Able-bodied adults will move into the world of work instead of becoming dependent on a destructive welfare system.*
- ✓ *Homeowners, renters, and job providers should see more than \$400 million in tax relief, including \$221 million in property tax relief on the ballot this fall.*
- ✓ *The state's \$19.1 billion budget represents 7.7% growth over the next two years, which is about half the historical growth rate.*

If you have any comments, please call, write, or visit me. I value your advice. Now that the session is over, Rep. Mike Carrell and I have opened our local office. This year we've moved to 4109 Bridgeport Way W., Ste. D-1. Call anytime, we're happy to help.

Sincerely,

Gigi Talcott

Office: 566-5739 • Home: 564-9779

• Education

As a lifetime classroom teacher, I continue to focus my legislative work on improving education for all the children in our state. Successes this year include improvements in reading and greater community control of our schools. We're going to test basic reading skills in the second grade to ensure that each student learns the basics before being expected to perform more complex tasks. The new superintendent of public instruction, Dr. Terry Bergeson, helped our Education Committee pass legislation that will assist teachers and parents throughout the state. I actually had fun writing this new law!

• Budget

Washington's new \$19.1 billion two-year state operating budget is an increase of only 7.7% over the previous biennium. I've worked to limit the growth of government so each of us will be able to keep more of our hard-earned money, to do more for our families and our communities.

The growth of this year's budget is about half of what typically happens in this state. We kept spending more than \$100 million under the "601 limit" of population growth plus

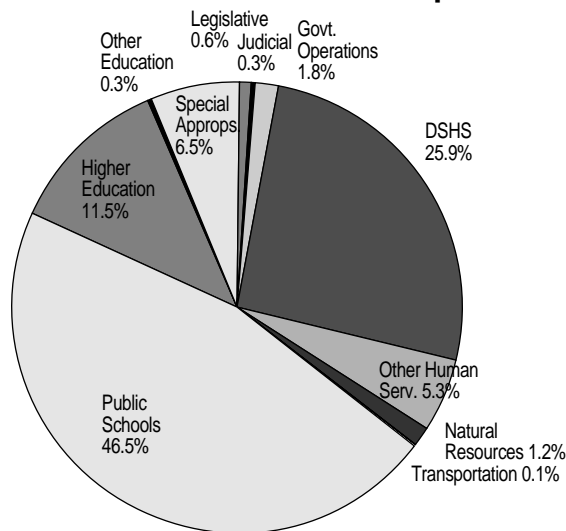
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inflation. We also provided **about \$400 million in tax relief** and left **nearly \$400 million in a “rainy day account”**.

This year’s budget gives an additional \$100 million in public school enhancements for kindergarten-thru-high-school education, with **increased state funding of \$138 per student**. The new dollars support improved educational policies, including academic assessments, classroom technology, reading improvement grants and special programs to get dropouts back into school. In higher education, the budget funds an enrollment increase of 6,515, with more than 4,000 new students provided for in the community and technical colleges where the demand is

1997-99 General Fund-State Expenditures



greatest. It also adds an additional \$33 million in financial aid for students to meet their individual needs.

State workers, teachers and other public school employees will get a 3 percent cost-of-living increase beginning July 1 of this year (*teachers’ raises will begin September 1*).

• Health Care

This year’s budget adds 8,000 people to the 130,000 currently receiving health care insurance subsidies from the taxpayers of the state through the Basic Health Plan.

• Property Taxes

Two tax cut issues will be on the November ballot, although they appear as a single proposition. The first would make permanent a 4.7% cut in the state’s share of the property tax. The second would peg the growth of property taxes to the rate of inflation or 6%, whichever is lower.

I strongly supported this tax relief. The issue will be before voters because of Gov. Locke’s vetoes.

• Youth Crime

Juvenile violence has been identified as the major source of crime. Four years ago the Legislature narrowly passed Democrat legislation that treated violent teenage criminals as victims. This year was dramatically different!

We passed sweeping reforms . . .

- *For the crimes of rape, murder, first-degree theft, and violent offenses involving a firearm, 16- and 17-year-olds will be charged as adults. Teenagers sent to prison will be separated from adult inmates.*
- *Juvenile records for serious crimes and sex offenses will no longer be sealed when the teenager becomes an adult.*
- *The juvenile justice system will require parents to participate in juvenile offender proceedings involving their children.*
- *Courts may require juvenile offenders to attend substance abuse treatment.*

I truly believe that our homes will be safer and we’ll have more resources to redirect younger offenders away from destructive criminal behavior.

• Ban on Oil and Gas Exploration

After temporary bans and one-time studies, House Bill 1189 establishes a permanent prohibition on coastal oil and gas exploration, development and production.

• School Levies

The Legislature is asking voters in November whether to authorize four-year school levies. Currently, the state constitution only allows for two-year levies. Rather than having a school levy issue every other year, this change would allow school districts to budget better and save money with fewer elections.

• Trauma Care

No matter where you are, who you are, or how serious your injury is, our state’s trauma care system was meant to get severely wounded patients the best possible care as fast as possible. But we’ve had to fly our trauma patients to Seattle in a helicopter. Thanks to Rep. Mike Carrell’s leadership, we’ll now have funds for trauma care providers to be paid for

from State Representative Gigi Talcott

treating uninsured patients. Funds will come from a \$6.50 fee on the transfer of title on motor vehicles and a \$5 surcharge on speeding tickets. With cooperation from our local hospitals, physicians, and emergency personnel, we can establish a trauma center to treat our severely wounded neighbors right here in Tacoma.

• No New Gas Taxes

We passed a \$3.2 billion “no-new-taxes” state transportation budget. Most people agree that we need road repairs, road upgrades, and some new roads to move people and goods around our state. The question is, how will we pay for the projects? I believe that we need to make an all out effort to get these funds from existing revenues. The only transportation projects funded this year will be paid for with current funds. We also intend to pinpoint waste and inefficiencies by doing a thorough performance audit of the Department of Transportation.

• Welfare

After years of talking, listening, researching and writing about it, this year I’m happy to report that we’ve abandoned the welfare system that traps children and their families in poverty. We’re creating a temporary safety net to help capable adults move into the world of work and independence. The new plan requires responsibility as it provides charity.

- *All able-bodied adults will be required to search for a job, participate in work or on-the-job training, or perform community service.*

- *Recipients may keep 50 percent of their earnings while on the welfare program.*
- *Teen parents are required to live at home or in an adult-supervised home — no more cash for rent.*

Like so many of our problems with government, it took us a long time to get into this mess and I believe we need to be thoughtful and thorough as we work our way out of it. Finally, we’re on our way!

• Seahawk Stadium

Voters will be asked June 17 whether the state should sell \$300 million in public bonds to raze the Kingdome and help build a \$425 million stadium and exhibition hall complex. The new stadium would be paid for by: new lottery games, a 10% tax on ticket sales and parking to events at the stadium, an extension of the 2% state tax on hotel rooms in King County that’s now paying off the Kingdome, .016% King County sales tax credit, and a state sales tax deferral on stadium construction. Prospective Seahawk’s owner Paul Allen would contribute \$100 million (\$50 million cash immediately) toward the construction and \$10 million to build community recreational facilities statewide.

• Update on Western State Hospital

Remember all the upheaval last year surrounding Western State Hospital programs and property? I’m happy to report that the Legislature has approved \$14.7 million to move the Tacoma pre-release center from Western State Hospital to build a new 400-bed minimum-security facility at the former

Reichold Chemical property in the Tacoma Tideflats. It’s a far superior location for prison inmates who are beginning their transition into the work force.

You may wonder what happened with the lake and surrounding property. That, too, is close to resolution. Hopefully, very soon Pierce County and the state of Washington will be signing a 50-year agreement with an option for an additional 50 years for the property to be maintained as a park. It will give Pierce County authority to improve the grounds and the old barns. The agreement shows how city, county, state and even the federal government can work together for the good of our community.



► Let me know if I can be of assistance!

My most important responsibility is to help my constituents in dealing with government. If you have a problem with a state agency, let me know. And please share any thoughts, ideas or concerns you have about legislative issues. Remember that I'm here to serve you, as well as to represent you.

NEW DISTRICT OFFICE LOCATION:

4109 Bridgeport Way West, Ste. D-1
University Place, Washington 98466
566-5739

E-mail: talcott_gi@leg.wa.gov
Toll-free legislative hotline . . . 1-800-562-6000



Invitation to 28th District residents: TOWN HALL MEETING

State Representatives
Gigi Talcott and Mike Carrell

► Thursday, June 19
7-9 p.m.

Clover Park Technical College
Conference room 31

State Representative
Gigi Talcott

I'd like to hear from you!

Please let me know how you would grade the results of this year's legislative session . . . **A B C D F incomplete**

Include any specific comments you'd like to share. Then simply clip this reply form and mail it to me at 4109 Bridgeport Way West, Ste. D-1, University Place, WA 98466. Thanks in advance.

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____